

Torrance Herald

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TO THE PEOPLE OF TORRANCE AND NEW SHEET MILL MEN

TOMORROW morning the Columbia Steel Corporation's sheet steel mill, the first plant of its kind in Southern California, will make history in Torrance when the first bar of steel will be run through the rollers while hundreds of Torrance residents look on.

The opening of this plant in Torrance is destined to mark an epoch in the history of this city as the steel center of the southwest.

In addition to the advantages and benefits which the mill itself brings to Torrance, the availability of sheet steel in this growing industrial center is certain to attract here other industries who use this material in manufacturing. Sheet steel is basic in modern manufacturing and the existence here of a plant turning it out means more for the future industrialization of Torrance than any other single factor.

In celebrating the opening of the mill tomorrow the people of Torrance have much to be thankful for, but likewise much to beware of.

Executives of the Columbia Steel Corporation have notified their employes that residence in Torrance is desired of the company's employes.

When this notice was posted at the local plant W. L. Booth, local general manager, warned landlords in Torrance to keep rentals at a reasonable figure.

In most instances this warning has been heeded. In a few cases it has not, and the effects of the few instances of rent-raising have been anything but satisfactory from a civic standpoint.

New employes arriving here from the north wish to live in Torrance. But when a few of them are confronted with rent-raises they become less and less enthusiastic about Torrance as a place of residence.

It was with knowledge of this fact that DeKalb Spurlin, owner of 50 houses in Torrance, which is more than are owned by any other individual or company, announced that rentals of his dwellings would remain unchanged.

This is good news to Torrance as well as to Columbia employes, and probably will do much to eliminate the effects of the few instances of rent-raising here.

One factor will soon affect the relationship of Torrance and the new Columbia employes. It is the big building program soon to be started on Western avenue acreage by the Harry H. Merrick Company. This company will start soon on its first group of houses. The

program will do much to relieve the housing shortage due to the influx of Columbia workers.

The writer of this editorial spent two hours Tuesday talking to men in the new mill here—men who came to Torrance from South San Francisco. He found them an unusually high type of men, men which any city would be proud to number among its citizens. He found them intelligent, plain-spoken, fair-minded, and strong for living in Torrance whenever houses are available.

Many of them have been driven from the city, however, by the reluctance of some landlords to rent to families with children.

This is a deplorable condition and one that should be rectified by the exercise of fair-mindedness.

As one sturdy, clear-eyed, first-class steel man said Tuesday: "I want to live in Torrance, but I am not going to drown my children in order to do so."

We realize that news of one or two or a few instances of this kind sweeps like wildfire through an industrial plant. We realize that the cases in which new arrivals have been particularly well treated do not receive the publicity given to cases of unfair treatment.

But first impressions are important—and if the new employes of Columbia receive bad first impressions of Torrance it will be years before their attitude can be changed. For in their impressions they are like all the rest of us.

We know that the people of Torrance generally want to treat these new employes with generosity and complete fairness. We know that these new employes are willing to be fair also. For we found that out by talking to them. We realize that there are not enough houses here to put them in if they all decided tomorrow to move to Torrance. It was in anticipation of just such a condition that the Chamber of Commerce spent hundreds of dollars to bring to the attention of Southern California builders the impending housing shortage here. That campaign is bringing results. Building programs of substantial magnitude are about ready to start.

This much to the people of Torrance. And this much to the Columbia employes:

We of Torrance know that when you men came down here there were few vacancies in Torrance. We tried to remedy it in advance, for we knew it was coming, this housing shortage. We haven't failed. We have induced some of the biggest building companies in Southern California to build a lot of houses in Torrance. The more houses go up the better for you men. For prices and rentals are influenced by supply and demand. We know you want to live here. And we want you to know that we want you to live here and are doing everything in our power, through our Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trustees, and other agencies, to make it possible and advisable. The Columbia corporation laid a new sheet mill in our laps on short order, and we haven't been able to provide the means of absorbing you men into our midst as citizens, but we're doing it as fast as we can.

Don't take root somewhere else. In a few short months we will be able to provide for you.

We have looked you over and like you. And we think you'll like Torrance when we get acquainted. We're trying to build a real town here and want your help.

Will you give us a good, even chance?

When Becker Says 11 o'Clock He Means It

In connection with the Columbia Steel Corporation's new sheet mill, N. A. Becker, brisk and breezy general superintendent of the corporation, has one hobby. And that hobby centers around the mystic number eleven.

Since Mr. Becker, known wherever Columbia operates as "N. A.," battled his way up through steel he has found that "11" has been his

lucky number. Up in Pittsburg, where the corporation has been expanding regularly and where "N. A." holds forth, except when there is a new Columbia mill going in somewhere else—up in Pittsburg all the new mills and expansion programs have been started at 11 o'clock and operations whenever "N. A." has had anything to do with them have started at the same

hour. So when ground was broken for the new Torrance mill, "N. A." insisted on an eleven o'clock start. And four months ago he said "We'll open the mill at 11 o'clock May 18, and when I say 11 o'clock, I mean 11 o'clock." So Wednesday "N. A." will hold a watch in one hand and a whistle cord in the other. When the second

hand says it is exactly 11 o'clock "N. A." will pull the cord. "The mill will start just then," said he, "because 11 o'clock to me is 11 o'clock and not 11:01."

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